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SUBJECT: APPROACHING THE EU IN ADVANCE OF THE OCTOBER
13 FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING (GAERC)

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request. See paragraph 12.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Summary: EU Foreign Ministers will hold their next General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) meeting in Luxembourg on October 13. We expect the formal agenda to include: Zimbabwe, Georgia/Russia, Belarus, and Uzbekistan. A background section covering these issues is provided prior to a section containing talking points. Points are to be delivered as soon as possible at the appropriate level to EU members only. Other posts should not/not deliver these points. Please note that while Uzbekistan is expected to be on the GAERC agenda and background material on Uzbekistan is provided in this cable for posts' awareness, there are no Uzbekistan talking points to deliver to the EU at this time. Posts are requested to include the SIPDIS caption on their response cables and to reference this cable.

BACKGROUND

ZIMBABWE

[1](#)3. (SBU) The agreement signed by the parties on September 15 provides an opportunity to put Zimbabwe on the path to democratic reform and economic prosperity. Though far from ideal, it serves as a framework for sharing power. There are plenty of holes in this document, including no division of ministries, the possibility that Mugabe will retain control over the police and/or security services, and no mention of amnesty or transitional justice. There also is no timeline for implementation, only language requiring ratification of relevant constitutional amendments by the Parliament. Nevertheless, if implemented in an approximation of good faith, the deal offers the people of Zimbabwe a chance to live in peace and to begin to move down the road towards political openness and economic stability. The agreement notes the Zimbabwean state's responsibility to ensure that all citizens have access to humanitarian and food assistance.

[1](#)4. (SBU) We welcome the agreement signed by the parties and are standing by to see if it will bear fruit by giving greater voice to the aspirations of the Zimbabwean people. The agreement promises executive authority for Morgan Tsvangirai and the Movement for Democratic Change, reflecting in part the will of the Zimbabwean people as expressed in the first round of presidential elections on March 29. The test of the new arrangement will be in the implementation.

[1](#)5. (SBU) The U.S. remains concerned about the welfare of the Zimbabwean people as a result of reports of

incidents of government-sanctioned violence and intimidation in some areas of the country. There are reports that so-called war veterans and youth "militia," previously organized and funded by the government, have not been disbanded and continue to assault and harass segments of the population. The Mugabe Government also continues to harass opposition supporters and leaders.

¶6. (SBU) Although we are encouraged by the government's decision to lift the suspension on the operations of organizations providing humanitarian assistance, we remain seriously concerned by reports that democratic governance and human rights organizations may still face significant challenges to their operations. Furthermore, the imposition of certain reporting and monitoring requirements on humanitarian organizations could potentially obstruct humanitarian and other assistance programs. We will monitor closely the re-activation of the food and medical assistance so desperately needed by millions of Zimbabweans. We hope that under the new inclusive government, civil society will be able to operate freely so that Zimbabweans can access greatly needed assistance and safely exercise their political rights.

¶7. (SBU) As part of our commitment to help the people of Zimbabwe in their time of greatest need, we have

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provided over \$170 million in food aid and other support inside Zimbabwe in FY 2008. In addition, we have provided \$2.5 million for refugees and asylum seekers in neighboring countries in FY 2008. We strongly encourage commitment to the agreement by all parties, so that the Zimbabwean people can experience relief and begin recovery.

GEORGIA

¶8. (SBU) High Representative Solana and EU Special Representative for the Crisis in Georgia Pierre Morel traveled to Georgia on October 1 to launch the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM) in Georgia with a visit to mission headquarters in Tbilisi as well as to the Gori field office. Solana also met separately with President Saakashvili, FM Tkeshelashvili, Interior Minister Merabishvili, opposition leaders and NGOs. All 225 EU civilian monitors are now in place at the HQ in Tbilisi, as well as at field offices in Zugdidi, Gori and Poti. Once all support staff arrive by the end of October, the total international staffing for the mission will be ¶352. 22 EU member states have contributed personnel to the mission. On October 1, three patrols successfully passed Russian checkpoints in the area adjacent to South Ossetia. The mission will not seek to enter South Ossetia or Abkhazia proper until after October 10, when the Russians will have left undisputed Georgian territory. The European Commission will host the Georgia Donors' Conference on October 22 in Brussels. The World Bank has agreed to co-chair, and invitees will include 65-70 countries. EUSR Morel met with A/S Fried and DAS Bryza on the UNGA margins to review planning for the October 15 Geneva conference on the political situation in Georgia; there were no significant differences in our thinking.

¶9. (SBU) Georgian President Saakashvili recently publicly committed his government to working with the opposition to reform and reinforce democratic institutions in a participatory fashion. We need to encourage and support these efforts, as well as his commitment to non use of force in resolving the South Ossetia and Abkhazia crises.

UZBEKISTAN

¶10. (SBU) In response to the killing by Uzbek forces of hundreds of civilians in the context of a jail break and hostage taking that occurred in the city of Andijon in May 2005, and the refusal of the Uzbek authorities to allow an impartial investigation of the incident, the EU imposed a visa ban on senior Uzbek officials - including the defense minister and national security chief - involved in human rights abuses in the country. In October 2007, EU Foreign Ministers, facing pressure from Germany and other member states, agreed to suspend the sanctions for six months, provided that certain conditions demonstrating progress in human rights standards and democracy were met. "With a view to encouraging the Uzbek authorities to take substantive steps to improve the human rights situation and taking into account their commitments," FMs in April 2008 noted progress on human rights and extended the ban for another six months. The October 13 GAERC will again take up the extension of the visa ban. Reports from Brussels indicate that the GAERC may drop the visa ban against Uzbekistan and maintain but "downsize" its arms ban to get rid of prohibitions on selling equipment and other items that are not weapons. Contacts say that EU Special Representative for the Georgia Crisis Pierre Morel predicts there will be a diplomatic offensive by Russia in coming weeks to engage its neighbors-including Uzbekistan. Many in the EU want to increase their own outreach to Russia's neighbors to provide balance.

¶11. (SBU) In June 2008, the U.S. implemented travel restrictions under a provision of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriation Act which could limit the U.S. visa eligibility of current or former Uzbek government officials responsible for human rights abuses in Uzbekistan. The Department continues to closely monitor the human rights situation in Uzbekistan and is working closely with the Government of Uzbekistan to encourage discussions and progress on this issue.

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¶12. (SBU) ACTION REQUEST: Please deliver the following points to the appropriate MFA official(s) as soon as possible (in advance of the October 13 GAERC).

BEGIN NON-PAPER TEXT

ZIMBABWE

-- We welcome the EU's close coordination with the U.S. so that the international donor community speaks with one voice with respect to the imperfect power sharing agreement signed September 15.

-- We believe it is important to make clear to the Mugabe regime that no economic reengagement will occur until a transitional government implements concrete democratic reforms.

-- Sanctions will remain in place to maintain pressure on the regime. The U.S. has a new, expanded set ready to go if Mugabe fails to join with the MDC to follow through on the letter and spirit of the September 15 agreement. We urge the EU to maintain current sanctions as well until genuine change begins.

GEORGIA

--We welcome the full deployment of the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia on October 1. We greatly appreciate the unprecedented speed with which the EU deployed the 225 monitors from 22 EU member states.

--We strongly support the EU position that the mission's mandate covers all of Georgia, including Abkhazia and

South Ossetia. It is vital that the EU, the OSCE, the UN and other objective outsiders gain full access to South Ossetia as soon as possible.

--We need to hold Russia to its September 8 and August 12 commitments. This means that we must hold Russia to its August 12 commitment to withdraw its forces "to their positions prior to the outbreak of hostilities". Keeping 7,600 troops in South Ossetia and Abkhazia violates that commitment.

--The EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia and the OSCE MMOs are the international mechanism referenced in the ceasefire and supplemental agreements. There is nothing in the August 12 or September 8 agreements authorizing any long-term Russian deployments outside of the separatist regions, and there should not be any Russian or South Ossetian patrols in the areas adjacent to South Ossetia nor any Russian patrols in areas adjacent to Abkhazia after October 10.

--The U.S. and EU should agree to impose travel restrictions on high-ranking Abkhaz and South Ossetian officials, and we welcome EU thinking on how to penalize Russian firms operating illegally in those regions. The international community - particularly the EU - has leverage here, and we need to remain united in support of Georgian territorial integrity.

--We thank the European Commission for hosting the international Georgia donors' conference in Brussels on October 22, and we look forward to participating. We applaud the Commission on its significant contribution of 500 million euros and encourage similarly generous bilateral pledges.

--We hope to continue the close coordination on preparations for the October 15 meeting in Geneva, keeping it focused on the long-standing Abkhazia and South Ossetia conflicts. Consultations with EU Special Representative Morel last month showed that our ideas for the meeting are very closely aligned, with no significant differences between us.

--The U.S. and EU need to work together to press President Saakashvili to implement his pledges to reform and reinforce democratic institutions, and to do his part to fulfill his no use of force pledge.

BELARUS

--We understand the EU is considering responses to Belarus' release of the remaining political prisoners.

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The U.S. responded to the prisoner release by issuing licenses on September 4 allowing transactions for six months for two previously-sanctioned enterprises. This action was thus proportional and limited in time.

--We would encourage the EU to take a similar measured approach. While we were heartened by the prisoner release, we have failed to see a real improvement in basic rights and freedoms.

--The September 28 parliamentary elections were a particular disappointment in this regard. Prior to the elections, both the U.S. and EU made clear that the conduct of the elections would be a key benchmark in our ability to build a closer relationship. Notwithstanding these warnings, the OSCE has determined that despite minor improvements, the elections fell significantly short of OSCE standards and pledges to make the vote count more transparent were not met.

--It is important that we continue to use the tools at

our disposal to seek positive change. We would thus encourage that any lifting of sanctions be partial and limited in time. Extensions of sanctions waivers and moves to relax sanctions further should be made contingent on demonstrable, positive change, not on promises.

--Possible conditionality could include the removal of the Central Election Commission head and the inclusion of significant numbers of opposition and independent representatives on the CEC and on election commissions at all levels. We should also consider requiring Belarus to repeal the recently passed media law which further restricts Belarus' few remaining press freedoms, particularly regarding the internet, and to pass one that is in line with OSCE commitments.

--We also want to continue to encourage Belarus to adopt a more Western orientation. It is clear that the Georgia crisis has provided Lukashenka with an opportunity to approach the West and ask for concessions and heightened engagement lest he be "forced" into the arms of the Russians. While encouraging distancing from Russia, we should be wary of Lukashenka playing us all off with little real commitment to the U.S./EU position..

--It is encouraging that Belarus has thus far refrained from recognizing South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and we should continue to emphasize that such a move would be detrimental to improved relations with the EU and the U.S. It would also remove one of Lukashenko's key bargaining chips.

--We see these two goals - promoting democracy and human rights in Belarus and encouraging a Western orientation - as mutually reinforcing. It is important that we pursue both simultaneously.

END NON-PAPER TEXT
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